

Re: For the Windoze haters – VS2005

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Joel Kolstad wrote:

I do somewhat agree with your sentiment, though, that Microsoft and "the computer industry" in general seem to try to force continued changes in programming languages, development systems, etc., even when it doesn't seem as though such changes objectively are any better, but are really just different. (Microsoft Office being a good example here — I'd estimate that for 90+% of users, Office 97 works as well as Office 2005.) I honestly believe that they do this to fuel the "IT economy," and thereby indirectly elevate their own returns.

Your suspicions, IMO, are quite accurate. Old Bill learned long ago that it really doesn't matter how the customers do it, so long as they do it with much expense (but not so much to make the effort completely worthless) and that it is done from something that came in a white box with the Microsoft logo on it. In fact, as one CEO of another multi-billion-dollar software pointed out recently at a conference, "...well..if you think about it...it is actually to our advantage that our products are a mess and redundant and confuse our customers. This way they buy more of our stuff."

There is a fight raging over in the C++ moderated group (http://groups.google.com/group/comp.lang.c++.moderated/browse_frm/thread/84253d37f970dd2b/d274f71b1aec4fd3) about what Microsoft is trying to do to C++. They have been trying for years to shove this nasty thing called COM down programmers throats. Their goal has been to eliminate *their* burden of having to replicate their libraries in multiple languages. Around 1990, they (Don Box and friends) came up with the the fundamentally flawed notion that you could have one super-interface-thing that would allow you to write a software component in one language, say, C++, and let the BASIC, FORTRAN, etc. coders access that component from their respective languages. Trust me, this is one of the stupidest things to ever come from computer "science", but after billions spent and much sledgehammering, it was bound to work somewhat so people went with it, somewhat. But after a decade, the industry saw the resulting code and realize that it looked and smelled like poo and that they were spending a lot of time ant-f*cking (to use a Belgian expression) and so they didn't bite as hard as Microsoft wanted. So Microsoft did some rework

and changed the name to COM+, which failed, then DCOM which failed again, and lately, .NET, which is really, really cool because it has the word "net" in it. Finally after contaminating the languages with new syntax that made the code almost unrecognizable, they decided to introduce an entirely new language to simultaneously attack Java from the flanks and kill C++, and make people stop complaining about all the poo that was creeping into their languages. Java lost a little bit of ground, but the C++ programmers took one look and said, "Uh..no..we're doing just fine."

The problem is that, arguably, the best programmers in the prefer C++ (and assembly). Microsoft's grand plan to trap the minds of the elite won't work if the elite keeps rejecting their poo.

So now they are trying the ultimate. They are actually going around to all the standards bodies that govern languages like C++ (ISO, ECMA) and trying to get these bodies to redefine the syntax and semantics of these languages. They started wooing the top C++ coders and paying them. For example, there is a column that is written by a noted C++ expert who has participated in the standards process, Stan Lippman, called "Pure C++".

(<http://msdn.microsoft.com/msdnmag/issues/05/02/PureC/default.aspx>) The first thing you notice about the code written in this column is that it is anything but pure C++. Instead, there is .NET fecal matter everywhere. It's almost like a verteran whore in the red-light district of Rotterdam calling herself "The Pristine Virgin". Subtlety was not Microsoft's primary objective with this ploy.

Anyhow, the idea is that, if you can't trick the programmers into eating your COM crap, you can at least trick the managers, who will hopefully force the programmers to eat your COM crap. This is why they carefully chose the term "managed" to mean interpreted code – any idiot who manages knows that something that is managed is better than something that is not. Managers conclude..."Let's start using C#. We can't have all this C++ code running amuck!!" What's remarkable is that many, many managers are falling for this dung. How far Microsoft gets is directly proportional to the gullibility of masses.

Luckily, there is marked polarization in the circles of experts about what Microsoft is trying to do to C++, and frankly I think, given how many international organizations rely upon C++ in its "pure" form, and mandate its use in critical systems, Microsoft has opened up itself for a government-sponsored lawsuit for false advertising. The results of subverting a programming language like C++ would have enormous financial consequences to the entire software engineering industry.

Nevertheless, objectively speaking, in support of the *engineers* at Microsoft, the IDE and C++ compiler proper of VS2005 is unequivocally first-class. If feel sorry for those true programmers at Microsoft who have been forced to silently compromise their principles to produce .NET caca for the rest of us.

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–Le Chaud Lapin–

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